BEAST OF EAST

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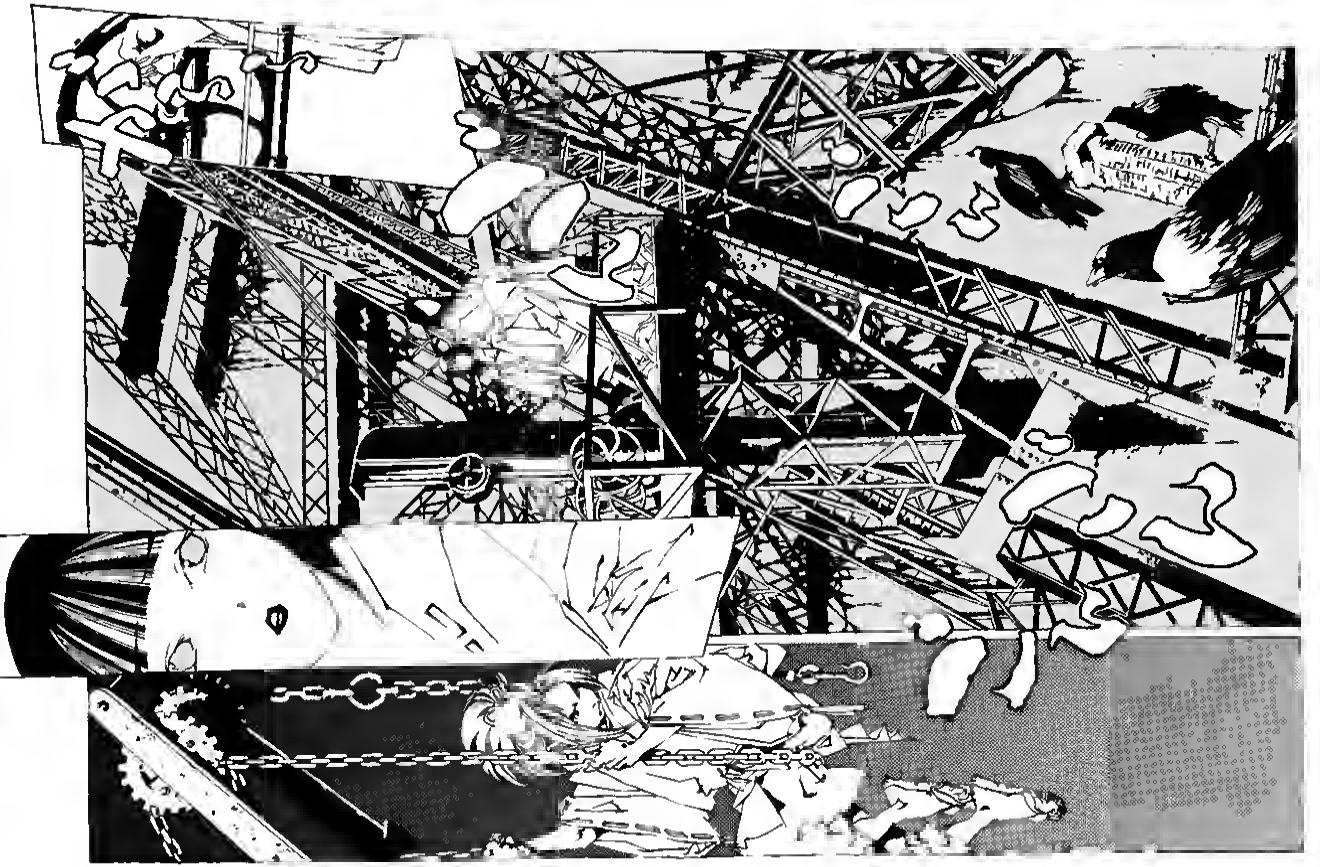
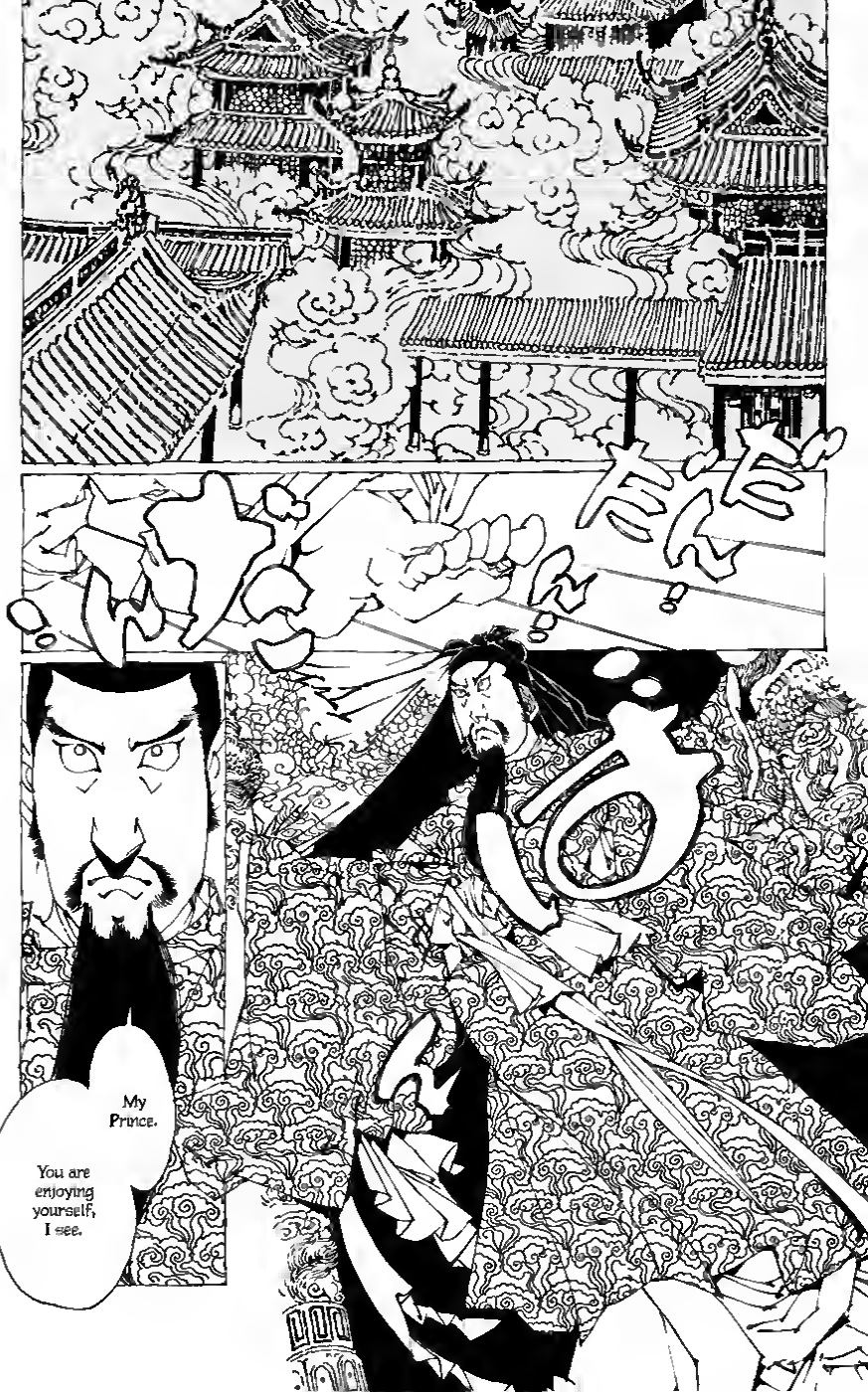
Across the bridge a burial mound– High, sharp tone of the flute
Second Act Foxes howl in the moonlight This is the abode of demons.
Mother, where are we...?
Mother, why would your benefactor be in a place like this?
I don't know for how many hundreds or thousands of years this burial mound has stood here,
but sometimes fox fires appear and even the villagers are afraid to come near it.

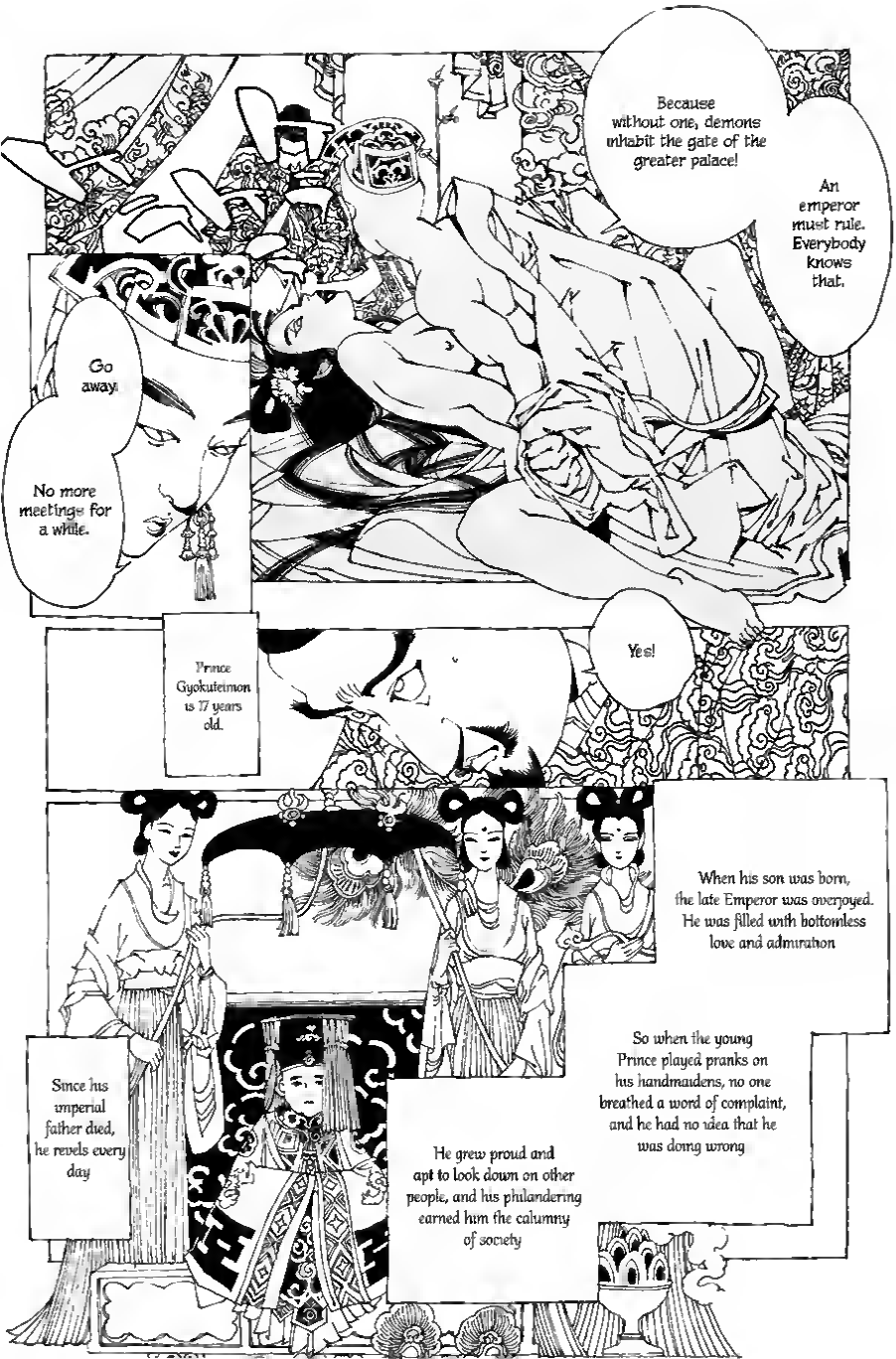
There is nothing to be afraid of.
She is a holy hermitess, who journeyed here from another land.




ドドド!!
My Prince.
You are enjoying yourself, I see.

I had no choice but to intrude.
Minister of the Right,
I'm tired of your never-ending lectures.
Of course, your wellbeing is paramount, but you have not been taking medicine the imperial physician prescribed either.
Despite the country heading towards a state of emergency, Your Highness has not granted the privy council an audience.
Therefore I, Michizane, have come to pay you a courtesy visit.
I faked being ill.
Those men will decide matters of government whether I'm there or not.
There's no point putting me on the throne if no heavenly signs show up
How do you expect to convince me to stand on ceremony?

I have no idea, my Prince.
By the way...
This?
Who is that girl?
I found her while wandering on Suzaku Avenue.
She was stripping the clothes off an abandoned corpse.
So I had her attend to my needs.
After a bath, she turned out to be quite the beauty.
PRINCE!
You haven't let me explain.
Say, were you aware of this?
It seems a demon has built its nest near the south Suzaku Gate.
Perhaps the corpse this girl robbed lost its life to that same demon?
It was covered with blood, ripped apart like a bamboo blind.


Because without one, demons inhabit the gate of the greater palace!
An emperor must rule. Everybody knows that.
Go away.
No more meetings for a while.
Yes!
Prince Gyokuteimon is 17 years old.
When his son was born, the late Emperor was overjoyed. He was filled with bottomless love and admiration
So when the young Prince played pranks on his handmaidens, no one breathed a word of complaint, and he had no idea that he was doing wrong
He grew proud and apt to look down on other people, and his philandering earned him the calumny of society
Since his imperial father died, he revels every day

had been silenced, excepting criticism from Minister of the Right, Sugawara no Michizane.
Night after night he idles in the Forbidden Garden, served red wine by court ladies and smoking his pipe.
Before long, all trace of malicious gossip about the Prince's behaviour
they can expect to suffer more than a severe scolding.
If any of his servants look like they might complain,
the land will descend into chaos!
But if an imbecile like that manages to cheat his way onto the throne,
If we believe what Tokihira says, then when an emperor is enthroned
the land will be safe from chaos.
Did you overhear my monologue?
WHO'S THERE?!
Sir...
I am on patrol.
Sir...
I did not.
It doesn't matter. You must hear many things while making your rounds.
Raise your head. What's your name?

I believe I have not had the honour of meeting you.
I am the devoted personal guard of His Highness Koichijon,
from Toyoda in Shimofusa Province.
My name is Taira no Kojiro Masakado.

Wh..
Who's this?
I am...
The mistress of this old chamber.
In Shang, I was followed by a retinue of 1,000 priests and wise men.
In Tianzhu, I eclipsed the king of 1,000 subjects
Now, I have employed your mother as my messenger, for I cannot bear to see bad fortune
befall a good-looking and gifted girl like you, raised in a thatched hut in the countryside like that.
You will wear fine clothes, and live in a palace. Every luxury you can imagine will be yours.
If you serve by my side, your father will be cured, and your mother revived.
I have waited
so very long for this, Mikuzu.
Hey!

lend me your ears. This is weird.
Mikuzu,
If you don't stop yammering, this speech will be as long as those lazy nobles' robes...
Onomaru?
I didn't like the look of the situation so I tagged along after you,
to the so-called cursed burial mound.
Sure enough, you must be a shapeshifter, huh?
CONTROL YOURSELF, BOY!
HOW DARE YOU ADDRESS THIS NOBLE LADY SO RUDELY!
With magic...
Mother...
Excuse me? The Auntie I knew was kind, she'd never say such a thing.
On the road home, I saw that Auntie's grave had been broken into.
This shapeshifter probably stole her corpse and is manipulating it with magic!
MIKUZU, LISTEN!
It's that "noble lady" with a skull hanging off her neck.

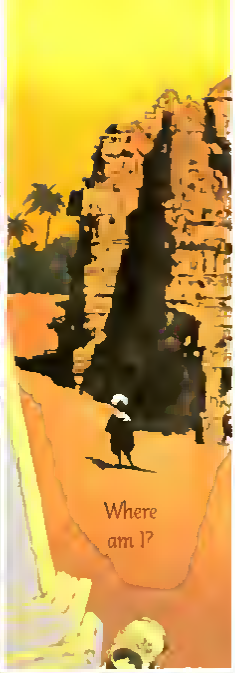
NOT LONG AGO, I SAW AUNTIE'S FACE TURN INTO A SKULL!
WAKE UP! YOUR MOTHER'S DEAD!
Mother...?
Mikuzu...
MIKUZU!
Forgive me, Mother
But I... Also...
WAIT!
No!
I know without a doubt that she's dead!
Otomaru would never deceive me!
I took care of my mother while she was dying.
OH?
YOUR TRUE COLOURS ARE SHOWING!

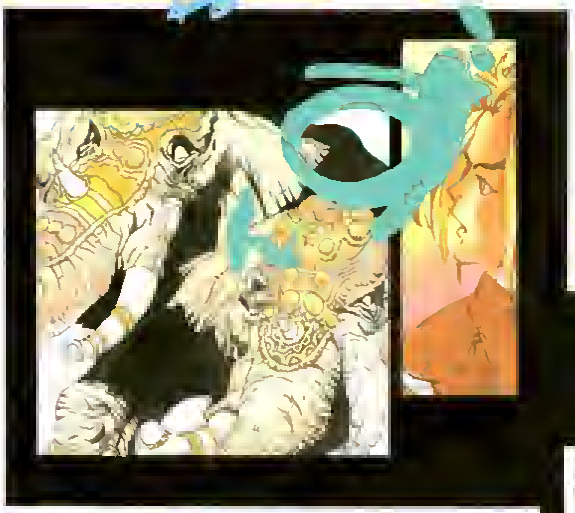
SKULL!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
RUN AWAY, QUICK!!!

AH?
HEY, NOW!
Huh?

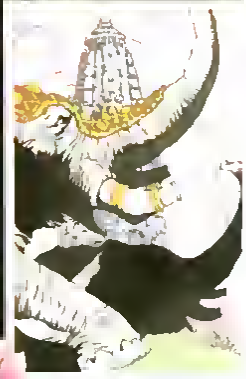
DAMN IT!
Hmp
What's this...?

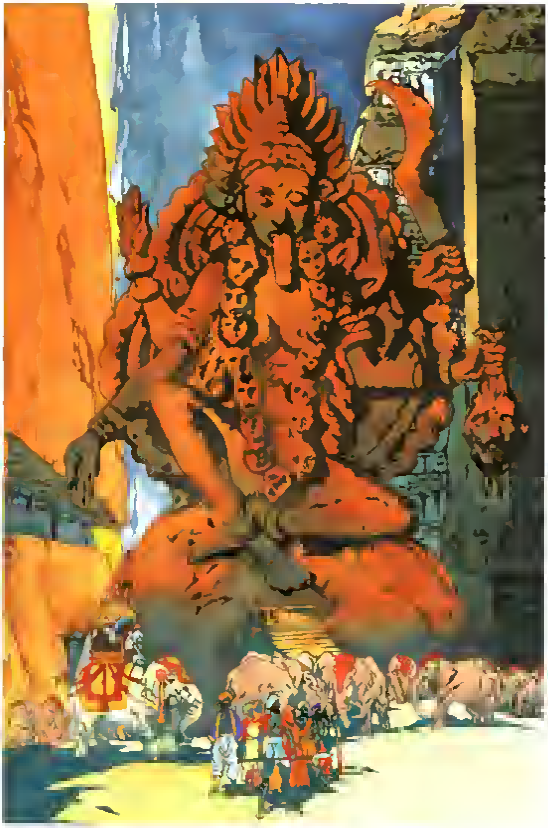
Two thousand years is a long time.
I suppose I must thank you.
What now?
That vile, vicious demoness whom we saw sink into the depths of time has been resurrected in the present age
The stars in heaven glow red like the fires of purgatory. Will the human world become an object of scorn for Tenma Hajun? Those of you who know this already will have to read the following tale.

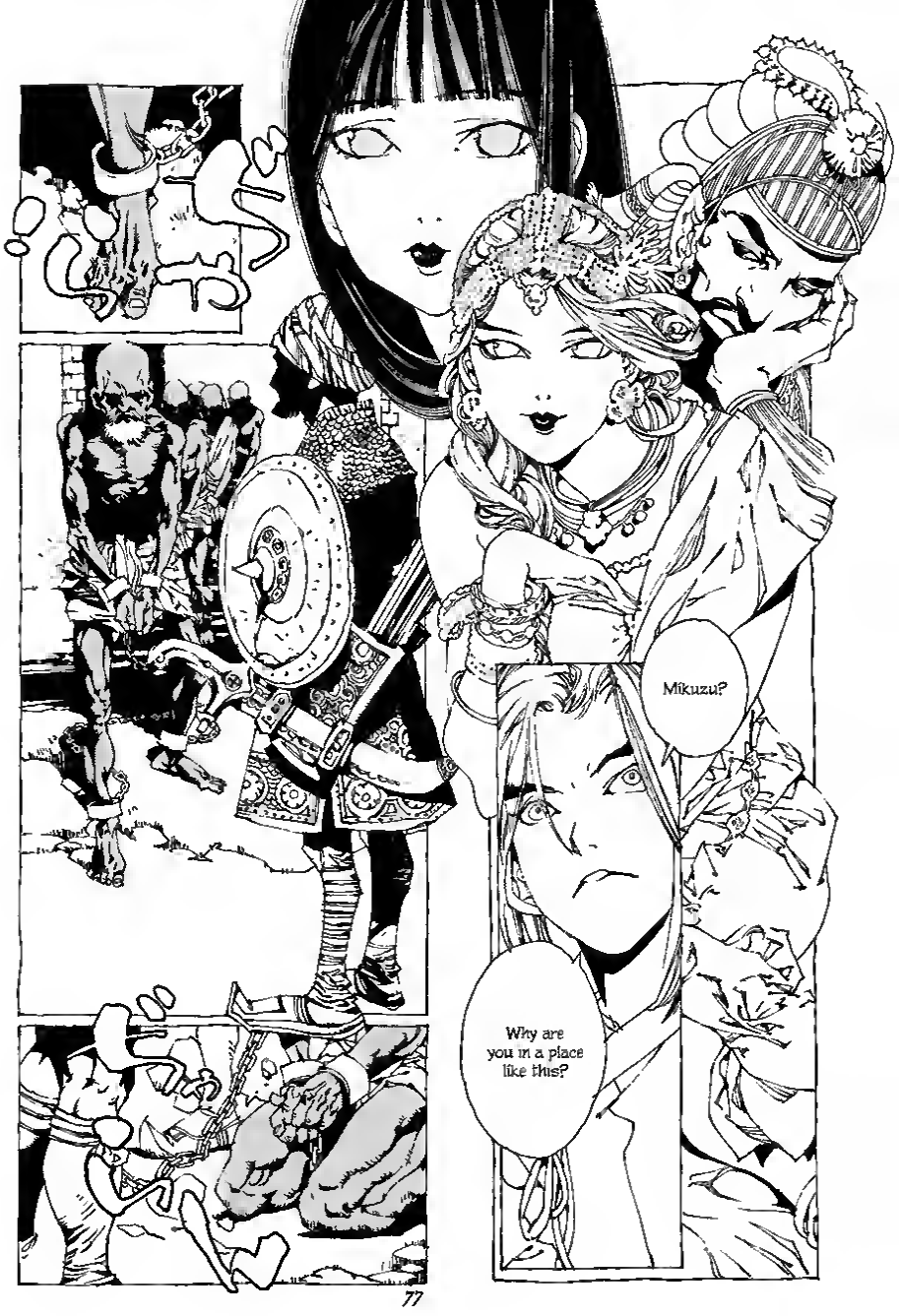




Ah, those
enormous
beasts..





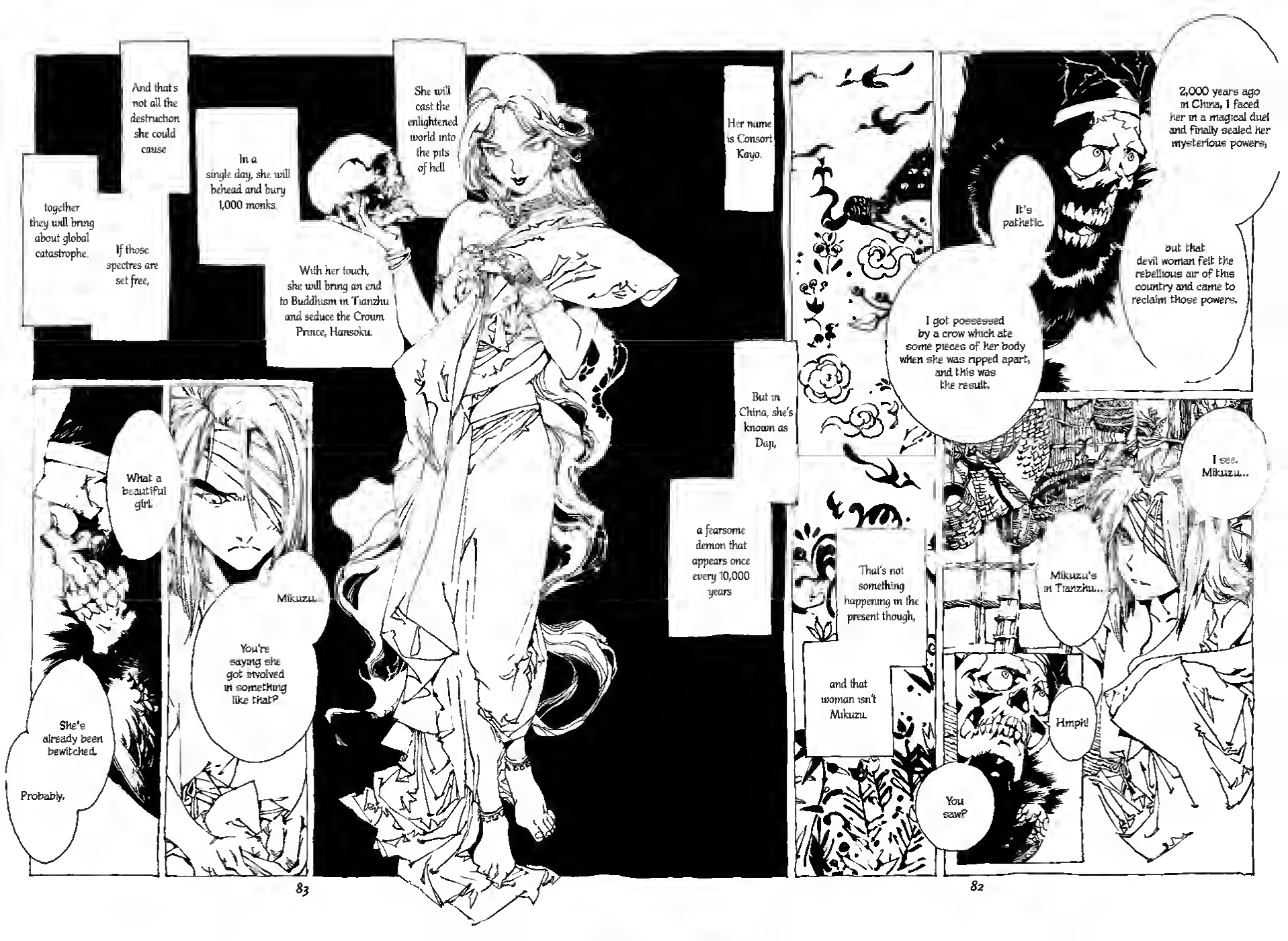

Mikuzu?
Why are you in a place like this?

Please, stop this.
Stop...
Are you making them do it, Mikuzu?

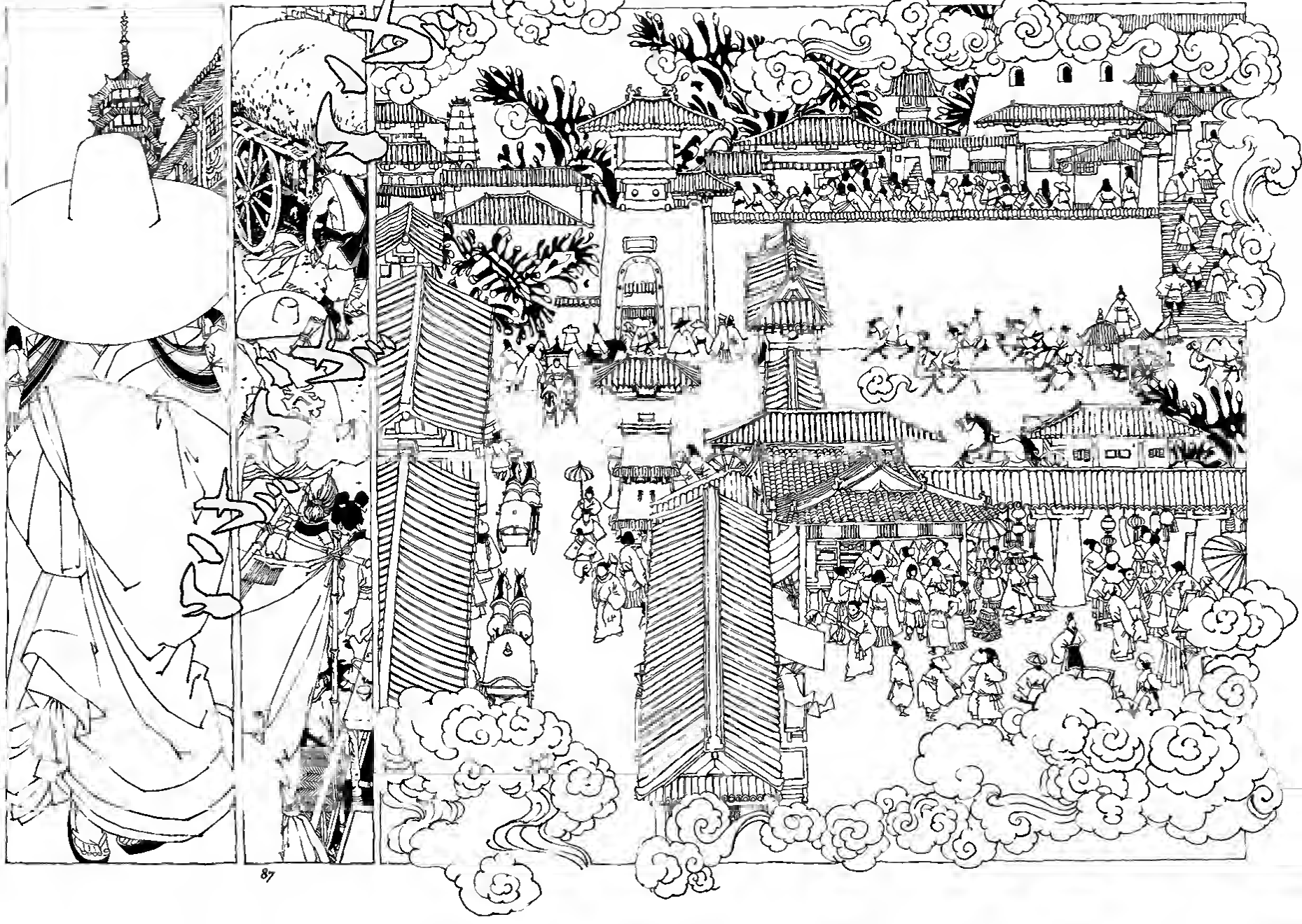
ST-
DON'T RAISE YOUR VOICE!
IF SHE SEES YOU, YOU'LL BE KILLED!
IT'S FORBIDDEN TO STAY IN THIS PLACE FOR LONG. YOU MUST GO NOW!
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
WH-
WHO ARE YOU?!

Ниф?

.....
Oh, you're conscious.
Very good.
I understand your surprise, but I'm no threat to you.
Ah...
I'm appalled.
that ripped out the throat of the mistress of that old chamber, who was entombed near the outskirts of your home town.
I'm the talking skull
You don't recognise me?
S... Surprised?
What are you?


2,000 years ago in China, I faced her in a magical duel and finally sealed her mysterious powers,
but that devil woman felt the rebellious air of this country and came to reclaim those powers.
It's pathetic.
I got possessed by a crow which ate some pieces of her body when she was ripped apart, and this was the result.
I see. Mikuzu...
Mikuzu's in Tianzhu...
Hmph!
You saw?
That's not something happening in the present though,
and that woman isn't Mikuzu.
But in China, she's known as Daji,
a fearsome demon that appears once every 10,000 years
Her name is Consort Kayo.
She will cast the enlightened world into the pits of hell
In a single day, she will behead and bury 1,000 monks.
With her touch, she will bring an end to Buddhism in Tianzhu and seduce the Croum Prince, Hansoku.
And that's not all the destruction she could cause
together they will bring about global catastrophe.
If those spectres are set free,
What a beautiful girl.
Mikuzu...
You're saying she got involved in something like that?
She's already been bewitched.
Probably.

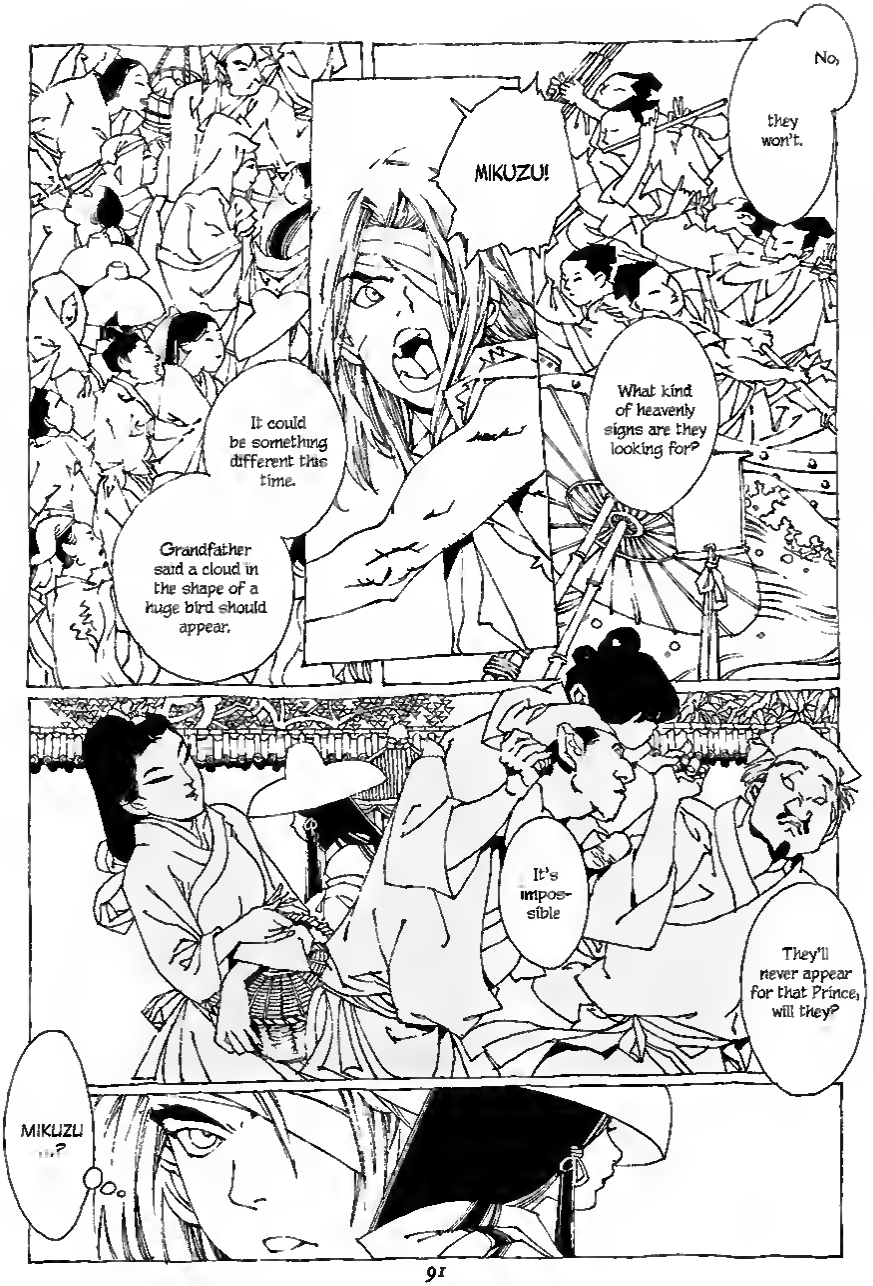
What is it, Omomaru?
You haven't dropped dead yet? Such a pity.
Even if you are a monster...
Wanna fight?
MIKUZU! WHERE DID MIKUZU GO?!
SHE ISN'T AT UNCLE SAKABE'S HOUSE!
OLD HAG!!!
OUCH!
Perhaps she went to the capital?
After all, today is the Emperor's festival.
Now, now. Don't overdo it. You've been asleep for ten days.
TEN DAYS?!
THE CAPITAL?!

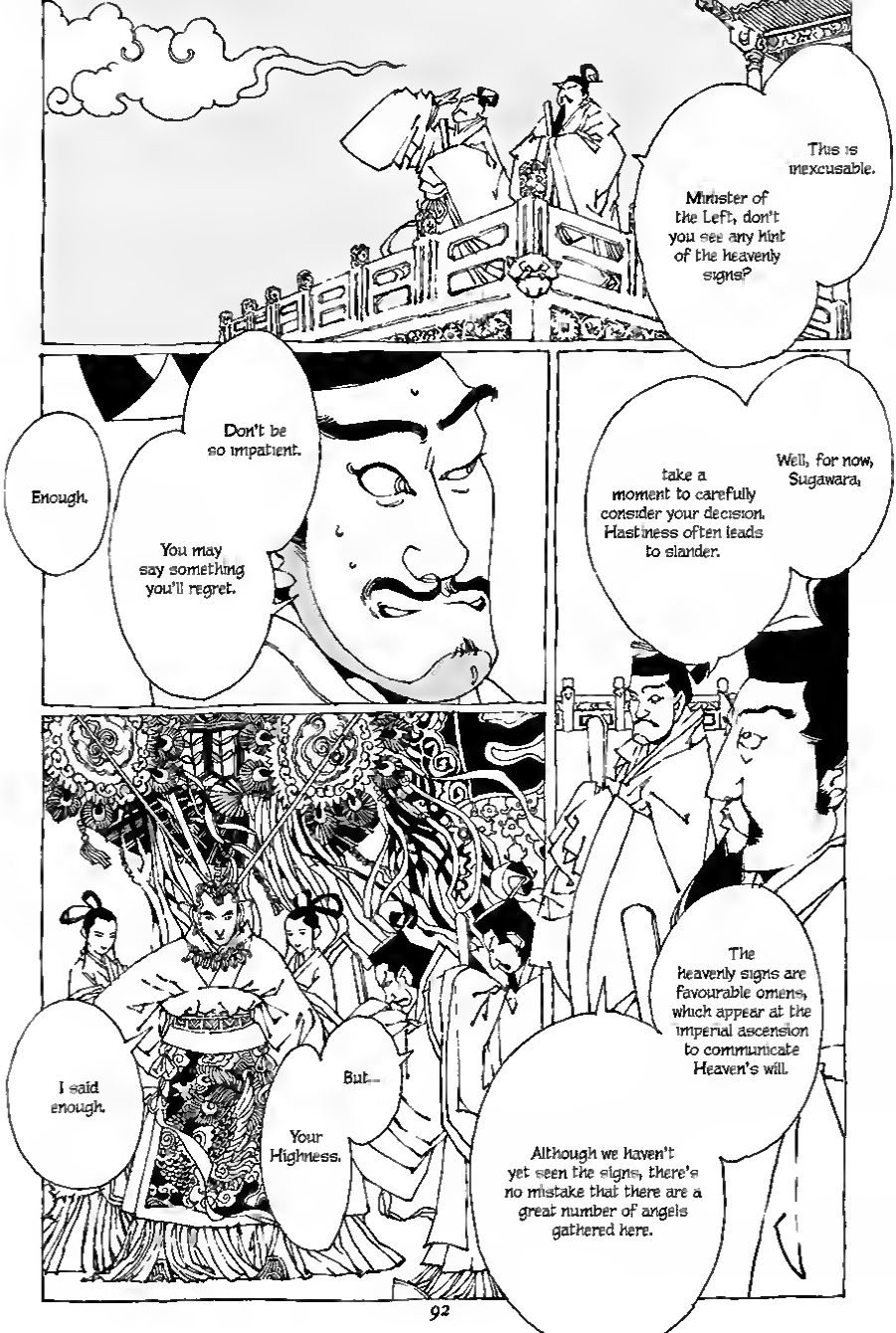


Huh?
Seimei,
have you already bathed?

How wonderful.
It would be quite an accomplishment to attend the Festival of the Six Realms and Ten Courts, and undergo purification.
I was able to visit the hot spring for the first time in ages.
Don't be ridiculous.
With all eyes on today's Fengshan Ceremony, if the heavenly signs don't manifest themselves the Prince will lose face.
You're pretty confident.
I think I will be fine.
Indeed I am.
there's still no other onmyoji equal to your skill.
Lord Mitsuyoshi was disinherited by the Kamo family, but
And if that happens, we'll be imprisoned and then rewarded for our failures with decapitation.
You should at least cleanse yourself, just in case.

So they won't need us.


No, they won't.
MIKUZU!
What kind of heavenly signs are they looking for?
It could be something different this time.
Grandfather said a cloud in the shape of a huge bird should appear.
It's impossible
They'll never appear for that Prince, will they?
MIKUZU ...?


This is inexcusable.
Minister of the Left, don't you see any hint of the heavenly signs?
Well, for now, Sugawara, take a moment to carefully consider your decision. Hastiness often leads to slander.
Don't be so impatient.
Enough.
You may say something you'll regret.
The heavenly signs are favourable omens, which appear at the imperial ascension to communicate Heaven's will.
Although we haven't yet seen the signs, there's no mistake that there are a great number of angels gathered here.
But—
Your Highness.
I said enough.

At any rate, I've hardly become the Prince that was wished for.
I'm merely the son of an Emperor.
I came here because the Minister of the Left advised that I could shoulder this responsibility.
But I've had enough. I'm leaving!
OH NO, SEIME!!
JUST AS I FEARED
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT!

Who's there?
Just a poor woman named Mikuzu.
I lead a solitary life, in the small village of Yamashina.
!
Step back.
Do not speak directly to the Prince.

Forgiver.
What do you want?
Wh...
What was that?

That ..
Came from the burial mound.

TRANSLATION NOTES

Across the Bridge, etc. – The connecting bridge ("hashigakari") is a section of the Noh stage which represents the border between this world and the spirit world. The high, sharp flute tone ("hishigi") is used in a number of Noh situations, including the entrance of ghosts and demons.

Burial Mound – Called kofun, these huge tumuli were built between the 3rd and 7th centuries AD. Ostensibly the graves of ancient Japanese emperors, they were probably actually inspired by Korean immigrants.

Minister of the Right – The Ministers of the Right and Left were important positions in the imperial government. The Minister of the Right was generally a deputy overseen by the Minister of the Left, who in turn answered only to the Emperor and the Chancellor of the Realm. Sugawara no Michizane (845-903 AD) was a poet and politician who briefly served as Minister of the Right under Emperor Daigo. After his death he was deified as Tenman Tenjin, the god of learning, who is still revered today.

TRANSLATION NOTES

Suzaku Avenue – Suzaku is the vermilion bird that guards the south in Japanese cosmology, and since Kyoto was built on a Chinese grid pattern, with the imperial palace in the north, Suzaku Avenue was the city's main boulevard: it led straight through the centre of the city from its main gate, Rashomon, to the Suzaku Gate on the south side of the palace.

Red Wine – Though grapes have apparently been grown in Japan since the 8th century, they were not used to make wine for over a millennium. The Portuguese Jesuit missionaries who arrived in 1549 introduced a penchant for importad vinho tinto, that is anachronistically depicted here.

Tokihira – Fujiwara no Tokihira (871-909 AD) was one of a long line of Ministers of the Left from the Fujiwara Clan, who dominated Heian politics. He is remembered for his grudge against Sugawara no Michizane, whom he eventually accused of treason and had exiled in 900 AD.

Shimofusa – A former province on Japan's northeastern coast, near modern day Tokyo. Toyoda was one of its districts.

TRANSLATION NOTES

Koichijoin – Born Atsuakira, he was the eldest son of Emperor Sanjo and crown prince until the powerful courtier Fujiwara no Michinaga forced him to relinquish his claim in 1011 AD. In return, Atsuakira married Michinaga's daughter, and Michinaga made his grandson crown prince instead.

Taira no Masakado – A samurai born into an influential clan who spent his youth at the imperial court. A longstanding feud with the Minamoto Clan eventually led to him invading most of the eastern provinces and making a bid to overthrow the capital in 939 AD. His insurrection was short-lived, but coincided with natural disasters and other strange phenomena which gave him a demonic reputation.

Festival of the Six Realms and Ten Courts – An obscure onmyodo purification ritual. In Buddhism, the Six Realms are the different states of being a soul can be reincarnated into, depending on its karma. They are God, Asura, Human, Animal, Preta, and Hell. Chinese Taoist mythology says that Hell is further divided into Ten Courts, each governed by a judge.